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ABSTRACT

The educational system of Turkey is discussed from a historical perspective. There are two main components to the educational system: formal education, which consists of preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education; and non-formal education, which provides educational opportunities for adults. Turkey has undergone a number of social changes in the 20th century including the transformation of the state from an empire into a republic; the population has risen dramatically; there has been intensive migration from rural areas to urban areas; and the social status and role of women have changed. These changes have influenced and been influenced by the educational system, and have resulted in increasing the educational needs of Turkish society. Eight priorities of the educational system, based on existing problems, are outlined. (DB)

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EDUCATION AND CHANGING SOCIAL REALITIES IN TURKEY

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This paper aims at presenting educational movements and its implications on social life in Turkey.

As is known, Turkey is a bridge between Asia and Europe both culturally and geographically. In fact, Turks originally come from central Asia and are mostly formed with oriental cultural patterns. Since the Republican proclamation in 1923 they have been approaching to western culture and intending to be a member of European countries. In this transition period, social values and realities have been changing very rapidly. For this reason, education has an important role in Turkish life. The paper discusses the amazing changes and the role of education in the society.

Finally, some predictions are made for the future of social life and education system in Turkey.

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Introduction

The lands of Turkey are located at a point where the three continents constitute the ancient world - Asia-Africa and Europe- are close to each other and straddle the point where Europe and Asia meet. Turkey has been a bridge between East and West both culturally and geographically for ages because of its location. The mainland of Anatolia, named once as Asia Minor later converted into America Minor, has always been the birthplace of many great civilizations such as Hittites, Romans, Seljuks, and Ottomans throughout history. It has also been prominent as a centre of commerce because of its connections to three continents and the seas - The Black Sea , The Eageaen Sea and The Mediterrenean Sea - surrounding it on three sides.

Historical Perspectives of Turkey

The Republic of Turkey, as is known throughout the world today, is quite a new state, although Turks appeared on the Anatolian peninsula, early in the middle ages.

The Republic of Turkey, proclaimed in 1923, inherited two historical resources with roots extending into the depths of the past. The former is the glorius past of the Turkish people that dates back approximately over four millenia; the latter is the history of Anatolia, where the Turks settled and which they have made their home since the XIth century.

Turkish tribes scattered throughout an area of 18 million square meters between the 20th century B.C. and the 20th century A.D. and founded several states which made their mark in the history are symbolized on the Presidential Flag of the Turkish Republic.

The first signs of the Turkish civilization in Anatolia can be seen at the beginning of the XIth century, when Turks migrating from Central Asia came and settled here. Until the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Anatolia was ruled over first by various Turkish 'Beyliks' and later by the Ottomans.

During the World War I, the Ottoman Empire sided with Germany and Austria and after the defeat of the Central Forces was forced to sign the Sevres Peace Treaty.

'Mustafa Kemal ATATuRK, known as the Father of Turks, defied the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres, whereby Anatolia was to be partitioned, and starting the War of Independence gave the country back its freedom. On October 29, 1923, he proclaimed the Republic. The Republic of Turkey today, in line with the principles outlined by ATATuRK, is a social, democratic and secular state.

Turkish Educational System

The Turkish National Educational System, like the other systems in the world, is the product of an interaction process depending on an historical background.

The educational tradition of the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) is based upon the islamic background. There were religous based schools in primary, secondary and higher education. The purpose of primary schools, named as Sibyan schools, was islamic religious instruction. The Koran was recited and the principal prayers were learned by rote. Medreses, the secondary and higher educational institutios, were in many ways the most influential and distinctive institutions of the Ottoman Empire. These institutions were essentially religious in character. The Palace Schools, called Mekteb-i Enderun, established soon after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453. The aim of the Palace School was to train the ablest children for leadership positions in the political body of the Ottoman Empire, either as military leaders or as high administrators.

At the beginning of the 19th century , it was realized that education should be one of the duties and responsibilities of the state. In fact, the first Ministry of Education was established in 1857, but still there continued a dual system of education; religious schools existing side by side with others in which secular subjects were taught.

The proclamation of the Republic has brought a big change to the fundamental structure of the state, to its aims and functions and the educational system has become the main power for this change.

Since then, the Ministry of National Education is responsible for the performance , supervision and auditing of all educational services, on behalf of the Goverment in conformity with the provisions of the Basic Law of National Education.

The fundamental structure of Turkish National Educational System has been set up by the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Basic Law of National Education.

The following are the constitutional principals underlining the Turkish Educational System.

1. Universality and equality, 2. Fulfilment of individual and social needs, 3. Freedom to choice, 4. Right to education, 5. Equality of opportunity, 6. Education for all throughout life, 7. Adherence to Ataturk's reform principles, 8. Education for democracy, 9. Secularism, 10. Scientific approach, 11.Educational planning, 12. Co - education, 13. School - parent cooperation, 14. Education everywhere (apart from school).

Structure of the System

According to the Basic Law of National Education June 1973, no 1739, Turkish Educational System consists of two main components, referred to as the 'formal education' and 'non-formal education'.

Formal Education

The formal education covers the institutions of pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and higher education.

Pre-school Education

This stage covers the education of children who are yet to attain the school age and is voluntary. By the end of 1990s the coverage of nursery schools and classes will have been expanded in heavily populated cities where both mothers and fathers work, as well as for families in economic distress; and the scholarisation target will have reached at 11.5 per cent.

Primary Education

The primary education covers the education and training of the children from 6 to 14 years is compulsory for both boys and girls, and is free in state-run schools.

The primary education is comprised of 5-year primary schools and 3-year middle schools. In 1971-1972 the implementation of the eight year primary education schools was started in 18 pilot schools in 16 provinces and the number of the primary education schools rose to 927 in 1990-1991 school year. Currently a great effort is being made to raise the number of years of compulsory education from 5 to 8 in Turkey.

Secondary Education

Secondary education encompasses general high schools, vocational and technical schools offering at least three years of education.

The aims of secondary education are to prepare the students for higher education and for a vocation, which provides them to take their place in the society. The scholarisation rate is about 45 percent; 24 percent in the general and 21 percent in the technical education. The long term objective of the secondary education is to channelize 65 percent of the students to vocational and technical education, 35 percent to the general education. Turkey has undertaken a reform that has been initiated together with the modernization of apprenticeship through the "Apprenticeship and Vocational Training Act" of 1986. Its main objective is to use the enterprise sector as a second learning setting and thus to develop a 'sandwich system' at secondary education.

Higher Education

Higher education covers all educational institutions which provide at least two years of education following secondary education. The degrees issued are two-year, four-year and post-graduate. Higher educational institutions are affiliated to the Higher Educational Council established on November 1981. The Higher Education is an autonomous, public juridical body with the authority and responsibility to administer the activities of all higher educational institutions.

There are 29 universities in Turkey, all but one is run by the state, with 399 Faculties and 263 Further Colleges.

Tution is charged for higher education, although financial aid is given to needy students of proven ability.

The scholarisation rate is about 15 percent in higher education. It has been planned that higher education facilities will be expanded throughout the country.

Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education provides educational opportunities for those who either have never been within the formal system or who are currently at a certain stage of the same or have left their formal learning.

The aims of non-formal education are to teach reading and writing to adults, to provide basic knowledge, to further develop knowledge and skills after formal education and to provide new skills for employment.

Non-formal education includes general and vocational components and is carried out in 749 adult education centers in Turkey.The new apprenticeship system developed by the Apprenticeship and Vocational Training Act in 1986 which enables on the job training also include both general and vocational education.

The non-formal education will gain a greater significance during the current plan period in Turkey with the development of international relations, the innovations in science and technology, the improvement of communication capabilities , the advent of the "information society " age , the rapid changes in the structures of professions and the occurence of sudden demands in the labour market.

Changing Educational Needs of the Society

Before stating educational needs, it is necessary to view changing social realities in historical perspective in Turkey.

After the Republic, social changes under the leadership of ATATuRK started very rapidly. We can summarize these changes as follow:

1. Transformation of the state from empire into a republic.

Turks, who came from Central Asia and settled in Anatolia, established the Ottoman Empire apart from several states and lived a 600 year time and after the fall of the empire they managed to found their last state in Anatolia again. It is believed that Modern Turkish State will be exist forever and be governed by the Republic. Radical social and cultural changes under the leadership of ATATuRK have begun in the early of The Rebuplican Era. The most significant changes were :

a. The Proclamation of the Republic,
b. The abolition of the Sultanate,
c. The abolition of the Caliphate,(The Ottoman Emporers were also the religious leader of Moslems all over the world)
d. Introduction of the Latin Alphabet versus Arabic Alphabet,(because the Koran was written in Arabic so the latinization of the alphabet at that time was one of the most far-reaching reforms in 1920s.)
e. Civil Law instead of Islamic Law, Mecelle (The law book which is full of Islamic rules).
f. The Law of Unification and Modernization of the Educational System, (Secularization in Education)

The above mentioned changes were amazingly realized very rapidly in 1920s, because the newly-established government under the leadership of ATATuRK was strong enough to enforce its reform programmes. That's why social changes in Turkey started from top to the bottom, because most of the people were illiterate in early times of the Republic.

2. Social Changes related to Population Explotion

The population of Turkey, estimated to be 12.5 million in 1923, increased to 13.5 million in 1927 and 50.7 million in 1985. According to the 1990 population census, Turkey has approximately 57 million inhabitants. The annual growth rate is 2.5 percent which gives the Turkish society a youthful character. Educational needs of the young generation is getting more and more. In 1989 school year, 1.5 million children started primary education and every year 250.000 children are to be added to this number. The younger generation the country has, the more schools, teachers and investments it needs.

3. Migration from Rural Areas to Urban Areas

Because of the high rate of industrialization taking place, intensive migration from rural to urban areas started in 1950s and continues to the present day. As a result of this, the rural population has rapidly decreased as a proportion of the total

population. It is estimated that urban population will have reached to 56.75 per cent in 1994. In spite of increasing urbanization, however, social life and the division of roles within families are still strongly influenced by social values, attitudes and by the rules of Islam. In fact, social and cultural change is one of the most evident phenomena in Turkey.

4. Changing Social Status and Roles of Women

Turkish women had no right to vote and to be voted before the Republic. Illiteracy rate was higher among women than men. At present, Women are equal and have the same rights as men in politics, in businees and social life. Although they have women liberation, those who live in rural areas especially in the eastern and south-eastern part of Turkey need more education .

5. Changes in Family Life

Altough extended families were common in Turkey, at present nucleus families have been common throughout the country since the Republican era. Family life and interaction in the family is changing. The number of children are decreasing, especially girls are attending schools more regularly and work in business life. Literacy rate among women are increasing gradually.

Conclusion

Education is a facilitator and initiator of social changes in a country. Especially formal and non-formal educational institutions as in Turkey accelarate the social changes very rapidly. As the society changes, the educational needs of the society also increases. Therefore,the sharp divisions between educated elites and illiterate masses allow change to be initiated, but they also create difficulties in communication and political participation. The bridging of these gaps continues to be one of the major problems of Turkey. In order to solve the illiteracy problem in Turkey, even military administrations in 1960, 1971 and 1980 interfered with the educational system and supported and enforced the educational institutions to increase the literacy rate in the country. According to the earliest statistics, 89.4 percent of the total population (13.5 milllion) could neither read nor write in 1927. Raising the literacy rate has been a major objective of the Republic ever since it came into being and has continued up to now. The proportion of literates had increased to 30 percent in 1945 and reached 40 percent in 1955 and lastly 85 percent in 1990.

Modernism in Turkey has depended on the secularization. For secularization does notmerely mean the diseslablishment of religion, the abolition of religious schools, the adoption of new laws, it also means change in patterns of authority, in the value system of the society and the ways in which individuals perceive themselves in a changing society.

As the population increases and social life changes, the educational needs of the society are increasing. In order to solve the basic problems during the last decade, the priorities in Turkish Educational System can be outlined as follows

1. To expand the provision of pre-school education so as to meet fully the demand for it,
2. To achieve a 100 percent participation rate in elementary education (96 percent in 1986)
3. To extend comprehensive schools where multi-purpose programmes are to be offered in secondary education.
4. To emphasize on technical and vocational education and also to reach a 65 per cent participation rate in secondary education
5. To attain a 25 percent participation rate target in higher education
6. To take the necessary measures to raise the quality of national education
7. To raise the rate of literacy of the society which has already reached 85 percent.
8. To pay more attention on life long education.

Comparative and International educators play an important role in order to realize the abuve mentioned objectives. Comparative educators in each country should interact and communicate to each other and exchange the ideas, researches, practices and experiences. In order to develop international understanding and consensus on national educational systems, comparative educators can expand their ideas through international conferences and mass-media. I hope CIES Conference in Pittsburgh will succeed in attaining this objective and Turkish Educational System will be known better and also will deserve to be studied in the world educational systems.

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